

Mounted Force Initial Entry Training Update

by Major General B. B. Bell, Commanding General, U.S. Army Armor Center

While we are deeply engaged in Army Transformation, the most crucial element of Fort Knox and the Armor Center's mission remains the preparation of mounted force warriors for full-spectrum combat operations. The First Armored Training Brigade (1ATB), "America's Iron," does a really outstanding job preparing our initial entry scouts, tankers, and mechanics for service with field units. We should all be very proud of the job they do. This month's Commander's Hatch will update you on the exciting work going on these days in 1ATB.

Scouts. To say the least, 19D One Station Unit Training (OSUT) is a growth industry! First, we expanded the 5th Squadron, 15th United States Cavalry from five to seven Cavalry troops this past year to provide enough scouts to man TO&E units at 100% strength as well as to support the growing Interim Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) mission.

Second, we created a 19K to 19D reclassification program to support the first IBCT at Fort Lewis. This redistribution effort will provide critical NCO leadership as we form the new Reconnaissance, Surveillance, and Target Acquisition (RSTA) Squadrons.

Third, we continue to update our Program of Instruction (POI) to include the latest equipment. In the near future, scouts going to units equipped with the new M3A3 Bradley Cavalry Fighting Vehicle will receive a six-day block of instruction on the vehicle upon completion of their initial entry training. Additionally, we've developed a training plan for the Long Range Advanced Scout Surveillance System (LRAS3), a super system now coming on line.

Currently, we provide intensive training on the Army's latest technology, including the Javelin anti-tank weapon system and the Advanced System Improvement Program (ASIP) SINC-GARS radio. We've also greatly upgraded call-for-fire training with the

addition of the state-of-the-art GUARD-FIST simulation system. These improvements ensure that as the number of scouts trained by 5-15 Cavalry increases, so does the quality of training.

Tankers. The requirement for every armor crewman to qualify with the M-16 rifle in addition to the 9mm pistol is the most notable recent change to 19K OSUT training. Many armor soldiers now serve as peacekeepers and peacemakers throughout the world and carry the M-16 rifle. Successful completion of M16 Basic Rifle Marksmanship (BRM) training gives today's tanker the competence and confidence necessary to complete all missions. This is also a soldierization issue which ensures our great tankers have the same basic combat skills as their infantry counterparts. Additionally, we recently completed a TRADOC review of our tank driver's training program that combines live driving experience with rigorous virtual training in our Tank Driving Simulators (TDS). Poole Hall, our TDS facility, is the only one of its kind in the world and continues to help us produce skilled drivers cost effectively. While we do not license our graduates, our program of instruction ensures the field receives a highly qualified apprentice driver who can quickly be trained and licensed.

Mechanics. Not only has the way we train our scouts and tankers improved, but we've updated our mechanic training as well. We no longer train separate turret and hull mechanics for the Abrams and the Bradley (MOSs 63E, 45E, 63T, and 45T). Instead, we now produce Multi-Capable Mechanics (MCMs), MOS 63A for the Abrams and MOS 63M for the Bradley. In addition to both hull and turret instruction, MCM graduates are also trained in selected direct support tasks that the Armor Force requested. We are also conducting MCM transition training for Skill Level 1 63/45Es and 63/45Ts. MCM transition training began in FY00 with the 4ID and continues in FY



01 with 4ID and 1CAV. Additionally, mechanics receive training on the M88A2 Hercules and the Forward Repair System (FRS). The FRS is loaded on a Palletized Load System (PLS) truck and has a 30 KW generator, an improved air compressor with air tools, and complete welding support. The Hercules offers improved survivability, a more powerful engine for better towing capacity and greater lifting ability, and a stronger main winch. We have also reinvented our 63A/M end-of-course Field Training Exercise. It is now a four-day, scenario-driven, all-weather, mounted FTX. Soldiers graduating from MCM Advanced Individual Training now get the full experience of troubleshooting and repairing real Bradleys and Abrams under difficult field conditions. When possible, BNCOC students are given leadership positions during these FTXs, making this a true multi-echelon training event. All these initiatives help ensure we send the best-trained mechanics possible to the field.

The 1ATB's primary focus is to develop skilled, highly motivated, physically fit, and well-disciplined warriors for the mounted force. Over the last two months, we have analyzed feedback from the field on how well our graduates are performing. A compilation of this feedback, as well as the complementary adjustments to our training programs, can be found at the Fort Knox web site at <http://knox-www.army.mil/>. After reading the results of the survey, I urge you to explore 1ATB's webpage to gain a fuller appreciation of the hard work and dedication it takes to turn a civilian into a soldier.

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